

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000918

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PTER BA IZ IR

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER SAYS BRUSSELS CONFERENCE A SUCCESS, "BAD RESULT" IN IRAN ELECTION

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The Ambassador called on Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa June 27 and discussed with him, among other subjects, the U.S.-EU International Conference on Iraq in Brussels, the Iranian presidential election, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' June 14 visit to Bahrain, and counter-terrorism. Shaikh Mohammed termed the Brussels conference a success, saying it demonstrated for the Iraqi people that the world cares about them. He complimented the Iraqis who participated, commenting that the speeches of the Prime Minister, National Assembly Chairman, and Foreign Minister showed that they are articulate, educated intellectuals. He said now the Iraqis should focus on strengthening the reconstruction program in parallel with fighting the insurgency. The first point is to meet the citizens' basic needs, but a secondary impact would be to show Iraqis the benefits of stability. He said 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces were relatively secure. Significant strides in reconstruction in these areas could have a beneficial effect on the rest of the country.

¶2. (C) Shaikh Mohammed called Ahmadi-Nejad's election as president of Iran a "bad result." He said that French President Chirac, during his recent meeting with Crown Prince Salman in Paris, referred to the Iranian presidential candidates as "horses following each other around a ring," and said there was no difference between them. Shaikh Mohammed said Supreme Leader Khamenei is in full control of the Iranian government and Ahmadi-Nejad would only be "Khamenei's secretary." He noted that the King, Crown Prince, and Prime Minister had all sent Ahmadi-Nejad cables of congratulations, but told the Ambassador that Bahrain would be watching him carefully. Shaikh Mohammed was concerned Ahmadi-Nejad would heighten tensions in the Gulf region, dismiss concerns over Iran's nuclear program, and defy the West.

¶3. (C) Referring to President Abbas' visit, Shaikh Mohammed said peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians must move ahead. Abbas is being very straightforward, saying the same things publicly and privately. Israeli PM Sharon should find ways to support him. Shaikh Mohammed said the Israeli Supreme Court ruling that the Gaza withdrawal is constitutional could serve as a legal basis for further progress.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador said that the USG continued to follow closely the legal case of the Bahraini terrorism suspects and was counting on the GOB to send the right message on terrorism. Shaikh Mohammed said he understood our position, but asked why the USG had not reacted publicly to the Omani Sultan's decision to pardon the Ibadhis. The Ambassador, noting that Shaikh Mohammed was the third Bahraini minister to raise the case with him (the others being Minister of State for Foreign Affairs/Information Minister Mohammed Abdul Ghaffar and Minister of Interior Shaikh Rashid), responded that Bahraini officials should not forget that the Ibadhis were convicted before being pardoned. They were charged with belonging to a secret organization and seeking to overthrow the state, but they were not accused of planning attacks or having connections to known terrorists outside Oman. The Ambassador stated that the case is very different from that against the Bahraini cell and the GOB should not read anything into the lack of a public USG reaction to the pardon.

MONROE